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754 anything that a man or woman has been eating are carefully picked up and hidden.

754 514 The magicians are believed to take the excrement at times and place it in a fire where there are hot stones which are supposed to make the victim very ill; at other times it is placed between the limbs of two trees, as are the pieces of refuse; the rubbing of the branches causes a sore in the victim's throat.

C. White Magic and the Healer

755 White magic is an effective force used to cure sickness, heal wounds, take away the malignant effect of a snake bite, and, in general, to remove from the individual a feeling of dysphoria and to give him a sense of well-being and adjustment to his community.

The white magician usually performs this function and applies this power. He can remove foreign objects which have been shot into the body of the sick man, and diagnose on the principle that the patient can live if the cause of illness is only a foreign object, but must die if his soul is stolen.

756 *Individuality and Social Personality of the White Magician.*—The individuality of the white magician is not different from that of the ordinary man. The only noticeable tendency in all the observed healers was their joviality and pleasantness in their ordinary social relations. There were no indications of the psychopathic personality, for psychologically and physically they were a very normal group.

The social personality of the healer is different from that of the ordinary man's only because of his additional magical powers; otherwise he participates in the culture much the same as anyone else. He marries, has children, hunts, fishes, fights, and enters the ceremonial life in a manner no different from that of other men. There is but one [184] rigid taboo on his behavior: he canont submerge himself in salt water without losing his power. Evidence is conflicting as to the existence of [262] food taboos. If there are such, they were not observed nor did the magicians admit any. The most successful healers were observed eating the foods which some of the evidence claimed were taboo to them. The reason for the belief in such restrictions seems to be that during their novitiate they undergo certain food privations.

The healer gains his power through extraordinary experiences with two or possibly three soul-children who afterwards become his helpers. [787] Both the medicine man and his familiars are called marngit. He can, in some cases, foretell the future and read a man's mind.

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The doctor diagnoses but does not announce the findings in his case. If the illness has been caused by intrusion, he uses a gentle massage to force the foreign object within the victim's body to a certain spot where it can be sucked out by the healer. If the sick man's soul has been stolen the magician can look through his body, see that his heart is empty and his body rotten, and he immediately predicts death. He may say that a man is possessed by a mokoi, since he is deaf, dumb, or insane. Other variations in the diagnostic process will be described later. 755

A good doctor can always find out who has stolen the soul of a man murdered by magic. One means of diagnosis is to take the armlet or hair of a dead man, place it on a stick which is put in the ground, stand off at some distance, stare continuously at the stick, and concentrate upon it. The doctor then sneaks up to the stick and hits it with his spirit bag. The spirits of the magicians who have killed the man jump out and the doctor recognizes them. He then informs the victim's clansmen. Sometimes he catches the spirits of the magicians when they jump. Everyone watches him, for the performance is public. When the medicine man tells the relatives of the dead man the names of the black magicians, the kinsmen ask him to try to kill the spirits of the sorcerers. Sometimes the diagnostician takes the hairs of the magician and crushes their spirits in his hands, which is supposed to kill the sorcerers.

One of the wives of a prominent man in the camp had recently died. Amburro, one of the older white magicians, came up to the hut. He saw some of the woman's hair. He said, "Amburro has come too late. If I had come before, she would not have died. She did not die for nothing. Somebody has stolen her soul and has killed her." Amburro said to the husband, "Have you got anything that I can have that belongs to that woman?" The husband said, "Yes, I have her hair here." The husband took some of the hair and enclosed it in the palms of his hands as directed by the doctor, whom he approached, opening his hands very slowly. Amburro grabbed the hair and held it in his fist. He opened it very slowly. He looked inside. He said immediately, "Those two magicians from inside the bush did that," and he gave their names.

The Ma-tji-tji or Spirit Bag of the White Magician.—White magicians usually have a small woven bag stuffed with bush cotton and attached to a head circlet, which is placed around the head so that the bag hangs by the ear of the wearer. The familiars of the magician are 756

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jungo's behavior very carefully. Finally he said, "He is a true doctor all right. He has some things sitting on his shoulder." Many people were skeptical about it at first, but they were convinced: Willidjungo disappeared into the bush one night, and when he came back they heard the clicking sound, a kind of beating against his shoulders. Everyone said, "He has those children there." From that time on everyone believed that he was a medicine man.

Other Powers of a White Magician.—The white magician has a number of additional powers by virtue of his familiars. The nature of these powers seems best explained by Willidjungo, the magician. All the things he claimed for himself were confirmed by his fellow tribesmen.

"When I treat people those two go right inside a man. That bone which is inside the man sticks right straight in him. I keep rubbing on the outside. Those two children of mine take hold of that bone and when I suck they jump out with it. Sometimes I can look right through a man and see that he is rotten inside. Those two go inside but they can do nothing. Sometimes when people steal a man's soul in the bush he comes here to my camp. I go look; he is empty inside. I say, 'I can't fix you up. Everything is gone. Your heart is still there, but it's empty. I can't fix you up.' Then I tell everybody he is going to die.

"Sometimes people carry a sick man to me and I see them coming a long way down the beach. I call out to those people, 'You people stand each side of him,' and I look in that man. Soon the souls of the two men who killed this sick man half dead come out. When I see this I call out the names of those two men who stole this man's soul.

"Before this, men and women have gone in the bush and have played with each other and one man's wife will be with another woman's husband. They say, 'We are going to spear kangaroo.' The man goes to spear kangaroo and then goes to find that woman. They come back. My spirit children come to me and say, 'That man and woman have played together out in the bush. You go tell that woman's husband.' I say, 'Oh, no, I won't do that. That will make trouble.' I do not tell their husbands and wives because that would make too much trouble in the camp.

"Sometimes I am sitting with a man and I look at his head and I can say to him, 'You think so and so.' The man says, 'How do you know that?' and I say, 'I can see inside your mind.'"

"Doctors like Willidjungo," I was told, "can find out about these things [soul-stealing]. They know what has happened—other people do not, they can only think, that is all." A medicine man can take the hair of a dead man, hide it in the stump of a tree and make a fire around it, after which he stands off at some distance from the fire and watches it very carefully for

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an hour or more: the spirits of the black magicians come out in the smoke and their faces are visible. The doctor comes back to the general camp and people say to him, "You have seen somebody, haven't you?" He replies, "Oh, no, I have seen nothing." If the magicians who have killed the man are still in the camp and hear this, they leave immediately, for they know the doctor knows who has done it and that he will tell the truth presently. The doctor then tells the relatives, who gather their spears to go kill the magicians and to avenge the death of their kinsman.

An old woman had been ill for a number of days in the camp. Willidjungo came up and looked at her and said, "That woman is going to die tonight." The other people said, "How do you know?" He replied, "My spirits told me." That night the old woman died.

Willidjungo was on Millingimbi Island in the Crocodile Group one day when he said that a certain clansman was dead on the mainland. The clansman's relatives said, "How do you know that?" He replied, "My spirit children flew over to the mainland and saw it and came back and told me." That same day some men came in a canoe from the mainland and brought the news that the man was dead.

Mun-yir-yir Acquires Power and Becomes a Medicine Man.—"I found my doctor spirits in my country, in the snake country. I was out hunting for bandicoot and I had caught one and was cooking him. I think perhaps those doctor spirits smelled that bandicoot cooking. I went down to a creek to get some water to drink. I leaned over and drank out of the water hole. When I did that a doctor soul caught my nose and made me sink down in the water. I was in a coma and fell in the water. The doctors, they were two boys and a girl, took my hand and put it in a dry place [to help him up]. They took out something from inside my body when I was sick after falling in the water and they opened my eyes and nose and mouth and made me well. They blew in my mouth. I got up and took my stone axe. I hit one of those doctor souls on the nose and I hit the others, too. They looked like opossums. When I caught them, one of the men doctor souls said, 'You make us well now.'

"I blew on the man and made him well, then I made the others well. They said to me, 'Now you go back to camp. Don't you eat dog any more, but you eat cold food and don't sleep near the fire.'

"When I got near the camp those opossums called out to me. They made a loud noise. The people said, 'Look out for Munyiryir. He has found some familiars.' These familiars hit their arms against their sides and made a popping noise. I came and sat down in my camp. I slept. I slept a little while in the night and went out in the bush. Those two took me to the bush with them. I did not try to make anybody well.

"I went to Elcho Island from the Naladaer country and then came back again to the mainland. Some of the people said to me, 'We are sick here

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in the chest. We don't feel well. Please, Munyiryir, help us.' I went then and took a shell and filled it with water and washed my hands. I felt over their chests and took out a bone and showed them. A man came from another country. He had a sore back. He said, 'I can't walk.' I looked from a long way and I saw that little hard thing inside him. I blew on his back and this thing came out a long way. I showed it to him. The other man went hunting for kangaroo then and his back didn't hurt him and he was very pleased.

"Those two spirits sit down on my shoulders. Sometimes they sit on my head. I call them my children. Sometimes they used to come to me in the night. They would say, 'There is a man sick over there.'

"In the early morning I would say, 'Where is that man?' and they would show me and they would say, 'He has got something inside him,' and they would show me where. Sometimes I used to take bushes and brush against the man and now blew on him and that hard thing would fall a long way from him.

"When I first started some of the people said, 'You are lying and not telling the truth.' I said to them, 'You look in my mouth.' I opened my mouth and let them see I had nothing in there."

A Case Record of Willidjungo's Treatments and Cures.—A Birkili clansman had an ache in his back. Willidjungo was called. He gave him the usual rubbing treatment, found the place that was painful, and removed a small stick. This had been placed within him, said Willidjungo, "by a mokoi. This mokoi was a swallow which swooped down over the camp. This bird is the mokoi of some very old dead person. He was angry because the victim had a yam stick in his possession that was owned by a Burera tribesman." The Burera are somewhat distant people from the Birkili and they are looked upon with extreme suspicion as great sorcerers by the tribes to the east of them. The mokoi, according to Willidjungo, had definitely tried to kill his patient. The mokois at times act in the rôle of vampire, since they can definitely attack a living man and make him ill or take away his good sense (make him insane).

Munyiryir, a former magician, had a very heavy cold in his lungs, which might have been a slight touch of pneumonia. After he had suffered a few days with it he called Willidjungo to treat him. Willidjungo brought his paraphernalia, including the spirit bag, a container of water, and, of course, his familiars. He removed a pointed stick from Munyiryir's side. He informed him that it was caused by an old mokoi. This mokoi came in the middle of the night and stood near their two camps (their huts were close together). In the middle of the night Willidjungo awakened his two wives and told them to look at the mokoi, which was standing by a tamarind tree. Both of them said that they had seen this ghost. When

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the ghost left, Willidjungo went back to sleep and the ghost went up to Munyiryir's and pushed the stick inside him. This was done because the victim had been given a ranga a long time back and had not returned the present to the owner of the totem.

Mahkarolla had been ill for a number of days with a very bad ache in his back which made him bend over to such an extent that he could not walk. He was in extreme pain. A number of years before he had fallen from a tree which had paralyzed his lower limbs for a short time. He sent for Willidjungo to treat him. Willidjungo arrived. He walked around him in a rather stately manner until he had covered a course of about a half circle. He then walked over to his patient, got down on his knees beside him and asked him to lie on his stomach. He washed his hands, took a mouthful of water and washed his mouth out and spat it on the ground. He felt all over the body with his fingers while examining the back carefully. He then rubbed his hand under his own armpit and again applied his hands to Mahkarolla's back. He massaged it carefully. He then removed the spirit bag from his head and rubbed it under each arm and against his head, then applied it to Mahkarolla's head and buttocks. The rubbing continued. Soon it was localized to one spot. The doctor then bent over his patient and put his mouth to the spot, in the lower part of his back. He blew against the place where the illness was supposed to be located, then sucked. He raised his mouth and spat. He spat again. He put his hand to his mouth and brought out a small stick about three inches in length and about the size of a small match in diameter. It looked like a large darning needle. Willidjungo diagnosed the case as due to a wrong that had been done his familiars, who had struck at Mahkarolla. There was probably more to it, but unfortunately this occurred when I first arrived in the field and I did not get all the details. Within two or three hours after this treatment the patient was well and walking around. He claimed that he felt all right.

Mahkarolla paid Willidjungo a stick of tobacco and some nut bread for the treatment. There must always be a payment made for a treatment by a magician.

Munyiryir, although he had been an excellent doctor and had cured a large number of people, suddenly lost his power because he unintentionally disobeyed the taboo, which, if broken, always destroys a doctor's familiars. This occurred within a few months before my arrival with the Murngin.

"I had been down," he said, "to the ocean. It was on the Goyder River side of Millingimbi Island. Those doctors of mine were sitting on my head and shoulders. I was out in a canoe standing in it when another canoe

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756 784 came along and hit our small one. I fell in the ocean and I was covered with the salt water. I heard those opossum children make noises. I put my hand on my head and they fell down inside the water when I came up. A little after that an old man was sick. 'I am sick inside here,' he said. [He touched his chest.] I looked to see what was inside him but I could see nothing now. My eye was too dark. I had lost my doctor children. I can't see anything now inside people. Everyone says that I have lost my very good thing that I had. It's too bad. I said to all the people then, 'I can't look out for you people any more. I fell down in the salt water and it covered me and I can't cure any more.' If I had fallen down in fresh water it would not have hurt those doctor children of mine."

752 755 *Diagnosing Snake Bite.*—Sometimes it is impossible for a man to determine what has stung or bitten him when he is walking bare-legged through the high grass. The Murngin feel it is always necessary to know what has caused a thing. Magicians are called in to diagnose, of which there are at least two methods. In the southern and more interior clan territories, among such people as the Ritarngo, Djimba, Gunalbingu and Dai, when a man thinks he has been bitten by a snake that has crawled away without his seeing it, he finds a hollow pandanus log. He then takes some blood from the wound, places it on a handful of grass, and sticks the grass in one end of the old pandanus tree. He lights the dry grass, blows on the smoke, and watches to see it come out the other side. The snake spirit comes out of the hole. If it looks around for food the man who is bitten will die. If it hurries away he is certain to live. By the other method of diagnosing a snake bite the magician rubs the injured part with one hand while with the other he holds a long thin grass stalk. The grass stalk is moved around the ground with great delicacy and is raised and lowered a number of times. In time some little particle of earth, a grass seed or a bit of bark, will adhere to the end of the stick. If it is only a grass seed or some tiny minute particle the magician diagnoses the bite as that of a small snake. If it is large, the snake is a large one. This diagnosis is also supposed to cure the injury.

789 *Rain Magic.*—It is not necessary to be a magician in order to make rain. Anyone can do it, providing he follows the correct procedure. No one would attempt to make rain during the dry season, since this is an improper time for it and nobody wants it then. However, if the dry season continues too long a number of people, usually ceremonial leaders of the various clans, attempt to end it. To make rain, a man gathers a large bundle of green grass and fashions a human image of

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278 757 be treated by magic, which is felt to be much more potent. Some of the herb remedies have magic mixed in with them.

Vomiting and Stomachache.—A nest of green ants is gathered, placed in a water-tight container, and put over a fire to kill the ants and eggs. Water is then poured upon the contents and the ants crushed in the hands so that the acid from the insects becomes infused into the water. The water is then drunk by the person who is ill. If a baby has a stomach complaint he is forced to drink some of this liquid, and the mother's breasts are rubbed with it. The natives say that it tastes much like tamarind bean soup.

755 *Diarrhea or Dysentery.*—One of the treatments for dysentery and diarrhea is to take some of the excrement and place it near a red ant bed. The ants carry the excrement inside their mound. This is supposed to cure a man in a short time, since there is a mingling of the power of the ant bed and of the man.

278 757 *Headache.*—The leaves of the mu-tir (unidentified) are gathered by a woman, and an infusion of them is made and rubbed over the head, face, and upper body of the ailing person. The leaves are rough, and the Murngin say, "This is just the same as rubbing sand over the body. It feels rough. When a man has a headache it is just the same as if he had dirt on his head and this cleans it off."

Sore Throat.—Drinking an infusion of broken-up leaves of the paper-bark tree is supposed to relieve a sore throat; sometimes it is drunk only for the pleasure. The fruit from the ne-urk tree is chewed to relieve a cough.

Heavy Throat or Chest Cold (girri girri).—The inner bark of the stringy-bark eucalyptus tree is chewed and swallowed to relieve congestion.

Tooth- or Earache.—The bark of the small plum tree found in the area is removed, the trunk is put in the fire until it becomes hot, and a portion is placed over the aching tooth or against the ear.

Bungeye (bum-bai).—This ailment is frequent among the natives and goes through a group every few months. Either one or both of the eyes swell and close for three or four days. Salt water is poured on shavings of the plum tree (dangapa). The infusion is then poured into the eyes of the prone patient for half an hour or so.—Bungeye is supposed to be caused by dirt in the corner of the eye, and not by watching anything which is ritually unclean.

278 752 *Granuloma, Yaws, and Wound from a Spear.*—The bark is taken from the tree which produces fish poison, broken up, and placed in

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water. The container is put on red-hot stones to heat. When the water has boiled sufficiently to form a poultice the latter is cooled slightly and placed on the sore or wound. 278 752

Granuloma, yaws, and spear wounds can all be caused by magic. It is thought that a magician can cause them by stabbing a sting-ray prong into the track of his victim while at the same time calling out the name of the object of his magic or by singing one of the black magic songs. It is also believed that yaws in the nose and mouth can be caused by a man's throwing away his nasal septum stick, which is found by an enemy and placed between two branches of a tree that rub together. This smashes the nose piece, and the man's nose and mouth are affected by this process. 754

Sometimes if a man has a yaws sore on his foot a live clam is found and the foot placed over it. The clam is supposed to suck the soreness from it. When a man has been wounded, frequently one of his kinsmen places his fingers in the wound to see if the spear has gone through to a vital spot or not. If he cannot feel flesh at the end of his finger it is believed the man will die. 755

Sting-ray or Catfish Wound.—A variety of the bush beetle is macerated and rubbed on the wound. "It makes the sore feel quiet and easy." Cockroaches are also used in the same way. 278 752

Poisoning from Untreated Cycad Palm Nuts.—Occasionally children are made violently ill or die from eating untreated cycad nuts. The natives attempt a cure by rubbing the hair with the stickers from the leaf of the pandanus. 278 757

Ringworm (pur-o-pur-o).—This is "caused from nothing," for, according to Murngin thinking, it is due to a man's scratching himself, no magic being involved. Ringworm is treated by rubbing the offal found in a bees' nest or red ocher on the ringworm scales.

Constipation.—The yellow pollen found in a honeybees' nest is eaten dry. "It acts just like that Epsom salts you have," said my informant.

Festering Splinters.—The splinter is allowed to remain in the flesh until it festers, when it is easily taken out. Beeswax is made into a small splinter and pushed into the hole where the splinter has been. A firebrand is then touched to the end of the wax; this melts the inner part of it and allows it to penetrate farther into the sore. This is done particularly if the splinter is in the foot for it enables the man to walk more easily. 278 752

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long time." The woman attempts to hit the man who is up the tree with her yam stick because she thinks him to be the soul of her dead ancestress. The remainder of the process is exactly the same as that for a man.

Ritualistic Curing of Illness in the North

When a person is ill in the north he is placed in a specially prepared representation of the totemic well of his clan. This can be con-

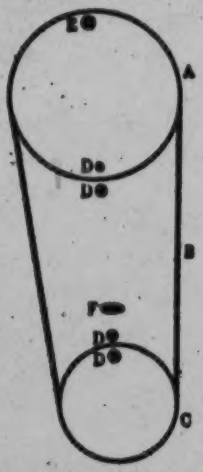

FIGURE 2.—SYMBOLIC TOTEM WELL FOR CURING RITUAL

structed at any place where the people happen to be camping, or on the ceremonial ground. The well consists of two circles connected by a channel (see Figure 2). One circle, slightly larger than the other, is about four and one-half feet in diameter (A), the other being about three feet in diameter (C). The connecting channel is about ten feet long and about two feet wide (B). The well is made by excavating earth with the hands from the center and piling it up six inches to one foot high along the outline of the channel. Leaves are placed over the heaped-up earth. The larger circle represents the actual totem well found in the clan country of the sick man. The channel is the place where the water flows out of this particular well, and the smaller circle is the "hole where the fresh water comes out." This conventional pattern is always used to symbolize a totemic well, no matter whether it be of the Yiritja or the Dua moiety. Holes are made connecting the various compartments (D), one from the large well to the channel and another from the channel to the small well. These are

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755 supposed to allow the water to come through. The holes are filled with leaves and grass. A shell full of water (E) is placed at the head end of the larger circle and a rock (F) is placed in the channel. This represents a rock found in the actual well and the fresh water which comes out of the spring. The sick man is placed in the larger circle which is the totem well. The male members of the clan gather about it and [533] sing the garma song, which particularly describes some activity surrounding the clan well and identifies the clan as a separate unit or part of the moiety. If a Dua man were ill, the members would sing the two old creator women, who, on coming back from hunting food, found their totemic emblems had been stolen by the men. The names of the women, references to the types of totems, and the shouts of the men who had stolen the emblems would be part of the song sequence. Red ocher is then sung by the chorus while a man is preparing some red ocher on the stone found in the smaller circle, and water is poured over the patient. The red ocher is then rubbed all over the body of the sick man. When this operation is completed the singing stops and the ceremony is over.

The Relation of a Prophylactic Ritual to Healing Magic

751 The relation of this ritual to the art of curing by magic is the same
755 as the relation between preventive medicine and ordinary doctoring in our society. In modern society, preventive medicine recognizes the fundamental causes of disease and tries to prevent their being present and active in a community so that none of the members can be made ill by them; therapeutic medicine becomes active if preventive medicine fails. The disease by this time has struck certain members of the community; the cause must be removed, but by different techniques—different not in kind, but only in degree. Both are scientific methods and both combat certain types of diseases which fit into certain scientific concepts and classifications.

The prophylactic totemic ritual averts illness from anyone who participates in it and from the group generally; on the contrary, anyone who does not participate in it will be ill. Illness and general [783] dysphoria are prevented by removing the accumulated ritualistic uncleanliness through the totemic rites of purification. During the year certain people become ritualistically unclean by breaking certain taboos and by a lax observance of the tribal laws. Magic and ritual cleanse them and the society generally.

It has been pointed out above that the source of ritual power which

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can kill or cure is in the totemic well and surrounding sacred rituals and objects. They belong to the general category of "inside" or sacred. The power of magic to secure these same effects comes directly from the dead, who belong to the same "inside" category as contrasted with the "outside." The two categories are both "dal" or sacred, and both ritual and magic are channels by which this power can be correctly expressed in the world of the profane.

Section II. A Sociological Interpretation of Black and White Magic—How Magic Works

Statement of the Problem

Durkheim's "church" among the Arunta is a clan organization. Each clan celebrates its spiritual unity through the unifying concept of the totem and with such objective symbols as the totemic emblem, its rituals and myths. Magic and the magician, on the other hand, fail to become part of religion and are antithetical to it because they have no church, says Durkheim. The magician as an individual manipulates techniques, and his power is the opposite of that of the priest (or ceremonial leader), who functions as ritual leader of the group. It is the thesis of this chapter that the essential nature of magic and ritual is the same, both expressing a fundamental unity and functioning alike for the individual and for the group, at least in Murngin society.

The analysis of Murngin magic to determine its nature is divided as follows: (1) a test of the magical belief of the north, which does not possess magical "techniques," with that of the south, which does; (2) an examination of the social configuration of magic in the south by (a) seeing what part ritual plays not only in the north but in the south, and (b) examining how the individual and the society behave when magic is put into effect.

The Test of the Northern and Southern Areas

The Murngin offer an excellent opportunity to study the nature of magic in relation to the social organization and society generally, particularly in relation to religion. The northern and eastern clans lack the medicine men of the southern and western clans and depend on one of the rituals for healing. The social organization of both groups is identical, the kinship system, the moiety divisions, et cetera, being the same even to minute detail. We can thus observe what elements are found in the non-personalized magic of the north and

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we circumcised those young men. That blood made her sick." One old man spoke up and said, "That blood made her sick. It makes women ill when they touch us after the Djungguan. It is the spirit in that blood that does this. It is the totem, not the wooden emblem, but the spirit inside with the power name. He is in that blood. A woman cannot touch it or it will make her sick." 753 826 784

Smaller rituals are performed by two or three individuals to cure someone who is ailing. Frequently women rub red ocher over their bodies because of an ailment, this being but an abbreviation of its use in the larger ceremonies. Red ocher string is tied around the head or body to cure a headache or abdominal pain. This act, too, is but a shortening of the ritual in which decorated string is placed around the head or body in the larger ceremonies. 755

Larger rituals are definitely used to remove pain. Certain parts of the Djungguan are designed to take away the pain from the boy who is being circumcised. The women relatives whip themselves in order to transfer the pain from the boy to themselves. The head of the boy's penis, they also say, is a turtle's head, so the cutting of the foreskin cannot hurt him since it is not his flesh being cut but that of the animal. These statements are also supposed to remove the pain from the boy. 785 826 831

Other rituals, which assure success in war, are demonstrably only elaborated magical practices. The gaingar spears represent the head of the Dua and Yiritja moieties. The souls of the dead of the moieties are supposed to be in each weapon. The ceremonial throwing of the spears to assure the killing of an enemy and to prevent the killing of their own men is definitely of a magical nature, the power of these ceremonies depending upon the souls' clustering around the spear just as the power of the magical killing stick depends upon the souls which cluster about its point. 778 789 775

The bone magic ceremony used in the maringo fighting (see Chapter VI, Warfare) is also an elaborate ceremony focused upon the magical idea of the soul's being associated with a bone relic. In earlier parts of this chapter the individual treats the bone in a ceremonial way to practice his magic against his enemies. Both the gaingar and the maringo ceremony from one point of view are elaborate magical practices participated in by the group and led by the ceremonial or war leader.

All the rituals, particularly the Narra, which celebrates the ascendancy of the clan totem, are commonly used to purify the group of 751 783

5: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1934
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of them are in a condition of perfect physical fitness, lithe and graceful in all their movements, and tireless in their own pursuits. 142

Various diseases, such as yaws, tropical ulcers, and ophthalmia, are frequently observed, while there are some cases of gangosa, granuloma, and leprosy. Epidemics of measles, influenza and whooping cough have upon occasion been carried through from the outer fringes of settlement, and have badly stricken these isolated tribes. 164

These aborigines will survive an almost unbelievable amount of physical injury, but they quickly succumb to diseases of a general character, particularly to fevers and pulmonary complaints, against which no constitutional powers of resistance have been developed. Considerable medicinal use is made of a wide variety of herbs and plants, but most of their practices in this realm are crude and of little value. In many cases it is believed that, as magic has caused disease, so counteractive magic will heal. 755 757

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ABORIGINAL MEDICAL PRACTICE IN EAST ARNHEM LAND

By T. THEODOR WEBB[1]

AS would naturally be expected among so primitive a people as the aborigines of East Arnhem Land the operation of magic, both in causing and in relieving sickness, is largely believed in. Apart from this, however, there is found the fairly extensive use of certain vegetable products which are at least believed to be of medicinal value.[2] In some cases the treatment consists of a combination of magic and the administration of medicine. Moreover, where medical treatment proves non-effective one may always fall back on evil magic as the explanation of failure.

One of the complaints from which these people frequently suffer is muscular rheumatism, particularly in the lumbar region. In such a case, should there be a *marrngit*, magician, in the neighbourhood, his aid will be sought, and he operates in the following way. Presuming the patient is suffering from backache, the *marrngit* has him lie face downward in the sand, and then proceeds to feel carefully all over his back. He then arises, breaks off a small leafy branch and dances round the patient, swishing vigorously with the branch. Presently he dashes away to a considerable distance as though in pursuit of something, and still swishing his branch. This is done to drive off the evil spirit which is responsible for the man's condition and which the *marrngit* alone is able to see. Having accomplished this purpose he returns to the patient. He now selects one spot on the man's back, which he presses and kneads thoroughly, after which he massages the surrounding area, working all the time toward

[1] Chairman of the North Australia District of the Methodist Missionary Society of Australia. A previous article, "Tribal Organization in Eastern Arnhem Land," by Mr. Webb was published in *Oceania*, III, No. 4.

[2] Unfortunately I am not a botanist, nor have I been able to discover any literature which might enable me to identify many of the trees and plants used and which are peculiar to these northern regions.

11: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1933 OI17 Murngin OI17

the spot selected. After a good deal of massaging, which no doubt affords some relief, he applies his mouth to the spot and sucks vigorously. Next he takes a mouthful of water from a vessel placed in readiness, blows some of the water on to the affected part, and then convincingly ejects from his mouth some foreign substance which has been injected into the man by the *mali* (grosser spirit) of some *morkwoi* (dead person).[3] I have seen such things as small stones, pieces of charcoal, bones of animals, and bits of wood thus extracted. This foreign body is shown to the patient who, nothing doubting, immediately feels relieved and cheerfully pays the "doctor" his fee.

Some years ago our little boy was suffering from a distressingly severe attack of inflamed eyes, and a kindly old *marrngit*, through a fellow-tribesman, requested that he might be allowed to operate on him. Conscious of his kindly thought, and knowing he could do no injury to the little chap, Mrs. Webb and I consented. He thereupon came up to our house, and after carefully massaging the child's head for a while, clapped his huge bearded mouth to his temple, sucked hard for a moment or two, then turned round and ejected a mouthful of blood. The child was at least no worse after the operation. The *marrngit's* explanation of the affliction was that a donkey which constitutes one of our possessions, had come up, hung his head over the fence, and stared at the child playing inside the yard. The little chap had naturally looked at the donkey, whose evil gaze had done the damage.

The "virtue" or healing magic believed to be contained in the water of the ceremonial or totemic *mangotʃi* (pool or well) of the horde is made available by a ceremony known as *wontjurr*. In this district the ceremonial totemic centre is always some pool, well, or spring of water. In the ceremony of *wontjurr* a representation of this *mangotʃi* is made by scooping out a circular hollow in the sand. In this hollow the patient is placed, while all round sit his fellow-tribesmen and friendly associates. A certain chant, differing for each horde, is then sung over and over again to the accompaniment of *bilma* (clack-sticks) and *yiraki* (drone-pipe), and as it is being sung

[3] These two terms are often used as being practically synonymous, and the conception behind them is practically equivalent to the old idea of ghost.

11: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1933 O117 Murngin O117

the patient is washed from head to foot by having water poured over him. This ceremony is believed to be particularly efficacious in cases of injury which have caused bleeding. In such cases not only does it aid the person's recovery, but also removes the tabu attaching to the shed blood. If, in the course of hunting, a man has been so injured, he must not give of his catch to another until by this ceremony he has been cleansed. This same ceremony is also used for the purification of the relatives of a recently deceased person. If a man be near his sacred pool the ceremony is performed there and he is washed in the actual " holy water " itself.

The most elaborate medical treatment of which I have knowledge is that carried out in cases of extreme constipation or for a severe attack of indigestion leading to a distension of the stomach and known as *worba*. First of all a rough platform of sticks is constructed. On this platform is laid a thick covering of leafy branches of *maipin* (ironwood tree) and on these leaves a covering of wet grass from some fresh water pool or swamp.

The sand beneath the platform is then scooped out and a fire made, which must be wholly of *maipin*, the leaves, bark, gum, and wood being used. When the fire is well burning the patient is placed, face downward, on the platform already prepared, a covering of boughs or paper-bark is placed over him, and there he is left for several hours to steam. He is then turned over on his back, and thus spends several more hours. At the end of the day he is bathed with cold water, and will almost certainly feel relieved, but if not, the process may be repeated the following day. In cases where no relief is afforded it is consequently known that the patient's condition is the result of evil magic. It is believed to be produced by some sorcerer getting hold of something belonging to the patient—his loin-cloth or *balara* (pubic shield) being considered particularly effective. After " singing " this article he opens out the coals and ashes of his fire, and in the centre digs a small hole, into which he crams it. He then fills the hole with earth, scrapes back the coals and ashes, and once more " sings " over it his evil chant, at the same time naming the man he wishes to injure. This operation results in a stoppage of the man's bowels, and so produces a condition which nothing can relieve, and which ultimately ends in death.

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136 Though most of the snakes in this district are non-venomous, there are at least two varieties whose bite is deadly. These are the *darrpa* (Port Darwin brown snake) and the *bati kuririmiri* (death adder). The former of these is the more common along the coast, and from the bite of this reptile quite a number of deaths occur. Nothing approaching effective treatment for snake-bite has been discovered by these aborigines, and nothing more futile than that followed could well be imagined. A man who has been bitten is 755 made to sit down beside a fire while another man blows smoke through a hollow branch or dry pandanus stem on to him. As the smoke emerges at the other end of the tube another man carefully watches, and if in the smoke he sees the *mali* (non-material form) of a snake, it is known that a *ragalk* (sorcerer) has brought about the misfortune, and the man will die. If no such form is observed the man will recover. Frequently this ceremony is performed after the man has died, and so merely serves to corroborate a conviction which has already been definitely reached. In such a case imagination never fails to create the *mali* of the snake.

755 Another very curious method of procedure is as follows: If a 752 person has been bitten and he is able to capture the snake he does so by pressing a stick upon it just behind the head and then binding the snake to the stick at that point. With the snake thus held he returns to the camp.

There the snake is left until it is seen to pass all the blood it has extracted from the person bitten. When this occurs the person begins to recover, and soon all ill effects have passed away. The snake is now released not killed. If it were killed the person would undoubtedly die also.

755 For the poisonous stab of a catfish, stingray or other fish a live 752a *borok* (wood cockroach) is taken, held between the finger and thumb, and its inside is squeezed out over the wound. Another form of 278 treatment is to apply the leaves of the *rorgor*, a long trailing plant which grows in the beach sand. These leaves are heated on the coals and pressed upon the wound. For the bite of a *butungor* (scorpion), the creature itself is killed and rubbed on the bitten part.

755 Amusing in its childishness is the method of treating pustular 752 sores, boils, or swollen glands. A piece of charcoal is wrapped in a

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thin sheet of paper-bark and placed on the sore. This is then bitten either by the man himself or by a companion. The sore, hearing the crunching of the charcoal, learns that some one is fighting it, and so takes its departure.

Bleeding is resorted to in cases of severe headache, and less frequently for backache. For the former a deep cut is made above the brow, usually by a single blow with an iron or flint spear-head. Another method is to take a splinter of glass or flint, and with a flick of the wrist to make a cut in the inner corner of the eye. Still another is to take a piece of *baku*, a trailing cane, split it and shape it to a sharp point. This piece of cane is then thrust up one of the nostrils, and is kept there with the finger plugging the nostril until a throbbing sensation begins. It is then quickly withdrawn, and is followed by profuse bleeding.

For wounds such as those inflicted by iron- or stone-headed spears the male flower stalk of the *woragar* (cicad) is used. This is split open and the soft centre obtained, which is cut into small pieces placed in a *dzakarug*, paper-bark basket, mixed with urine, warmed by dropping a hot stone into it, and then applied to the wound.

The treatment of a man who has been so wounded that his intestines protrude is a crude and gruesome business. A man so wounded sits on the ground while a companion withdraws as much of his viscera as possible and lays it out on the sand beside him. The injured man then takes a deep drink of water, and all present watch to see if any of it escapes from the parts visible. If no leakage is observed it is presumed that the man has suffered no internal injury, and his organs are washed and replaced. Certain plants are then obtained which may be used either singly or in conjunction. These are *dirrbuk*, a small carrrot-like root, and *lauwarr*, a kind of grass. These are pounded between stones and then inserted through the wound into the abdominal cavity in order to keep the organs in position. If neither of these plants are to be obtained, almost any substance may be used.

The external wound is then painted with white clay and a dressing made of *warrkarr*, the bulb of a large lily, is applied, after which the man is bound round with strips of paper-bark. Nothing

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776 that his *marngit*, being spirits—supernatural beings—have
787 the power to see spirit things. The *marngitmirri* would often approach his patient as he lay on the ground, carrying in his hand a leafy branchlet. From time to time he would [765] sweep the air and the ground, with a forward motion and then step suddenly aside. The purpose of this was twofold—first, because the *malli* of the *ragalk* might be lurking near and would reveal itself in dodging the branch, and secondly to drive his *marngit* inside the body. The *marngitmirri* would then quickly approach the victim and place one hand over the mouth, the other over the anus. The natives explained that, when the medicineman had driven the *marngit* to the sick man or dead body, they would enter by the mouth or anus and walk about inside, making a minute examination of the organs. By preventing the exit of the *marngit* in this way, the *marngitmirri* could make sure that their examination was a thorough one. Later the *marngit* would tell him what they had seen, for he claims that, after being tested and adopted by the *marngit*, unlike the lay members of his group, he is able to talk to the *marngit* and to hear them when they speak to him.

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776 Some of the *marngitmirri* said that their *marngit* remained with them for a long period, often for their whole lives. Sometimes they would be absent for days when they went to look for the honey on which they were believed to subsist, in the caves among rocks which they frequent.

Wilindjango of Mildjingi, whose *marngit* are shown in Plate Jb, said that the *warrakan* (animals)—adding *marngit warrakan*—had first come to him when he was alone in the [787] bush. Originally he had only two. They hovered around and then sat one on each of his shoulders, and he declared that they looked like 'small pigeons.' They folded their wings like birds as they sat, but they talked like *yulngo*—humans.

All the *marngitmirri* with whom I lived and to whom I talked about their cult, agreed that their *marngit* had come to them suddenly and unexpectedly. Their accounts all agreed that in the beginning they had been either incapacitated by injuries inflicted by the *marngit* and later restored by them or had been sick and made well again. Some of the *marngitmirri* said that they had been invited by the *marngit* in turn to test their own skill by injuring the *marngit* and trying to restore them. They declared that this procedure, and these visits, had continued for some time—sometimes for weeks—before the *marngit* had finally adopted them.

The medicinemen, in talking of their *marngit*, referred to them as *warrakan* bird (or animal) or *warrakan kulong*, and declared that the *marngit* often addressed the man whom they had adopted by the kinship term *papa* (father). Sometimes the medicineman applied the term *yoto*, child, to his *marngit*.

The accounts given by several *marngitmirri* agree in saying that their *marngit* did not remain with them continuously but that they visited their *marngitmirri* in his camp early in the morning and at evening, sometimes

[p.102(A)]

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Preface

ARNHEM LAND! Here fish climb trees, the sun sets in green fire and women hoard human skulls. It is the home of Stone Age man who shaves his head, and dismembers and bakes a body before eating it to absorb warrior-strength. The witch-doctor is supreme and treats fevers by massaging, pummelling and sucking gravel, blood, and animal bones from dumbfounded patients. Beside the backwaters of the untamed north, Stone Age nomads continue their ageless life and timeless practices.

Little is known of the Australian aboriginal except that in the Stone Age he broke away or was driven out from the rest of the human race and wandered to Australia. He possessed a continent at the cost of becoming isolated from the rest of the human race. Other nomadic hunters evolved into pastoralists or agriculturists but the aboriginal was denied normal development, for neither Stone Age nomad nor modern scientist has succeeded in adapting indigenous food-plants to everyday needs, and no Australian animal has been domesticated—as Dr Gilruth once succinctly remarked: 'You can't ride a wallaby or milk a wombat.'

Aboriginal development was not stimulated by the white man and his nineteenth-century civilization. As early as 1860, the explorer McDouall Stuart built his cairn, marked his tree, and recorded: 'I am now camped in the centre of Australia; I have marked a tree and planted the British flag there. We gave three cheers for the flag, the emblem of civilization, religion, and liberty, and may it be a sign to the natives that the dawn of liberty, civilization, and Christianity is about to break on them.' But every pioneer was not a Stuart, and as Dr Madigan says: 'What did break on the

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bartered from a passing lugger. In church, the situation got out of control when a bearded nomad came in dressed only in a lady's pair of waist-to-knee pink drawers acquired in Darwin and bartered for over five hundred miles.

With refreshing independence older Yulengor remained aloof from the fashion of wearing clothes. Daughters of Wonggu, the husband of twenty-odd wives and father of many children, advised him to don a covering, but he naïvely remarked: 'Why should I wear clothes? There's nothing wrong with me; I have nothing to hide.' He walks about as Nature made him, except for two strands of bush string tied round his waist. When I asked him why he wore the string, he told me it was for chronic back-ache.

It seemed only reasonable at Yirrkala to preserve Yulengor culture, to encourage the revival of old ceremonies, and to stimulate in the people an appreciation of their own social organization which often has suffered from alien contact. It is unjust for any alien to come amongst primitive people for the purpose of upsetting their mode of life and converting them to living and thinking as he does; and there is no one so pathetic as a detribalized aboriginal. He is adrift from his own society and cannot fully enter into the alien social life he apes. However, it is not to be expected that all the Yulengor customs are harmless and worthy of a place in their social life; some practices lend themselves to development, but others, such as infanticide, have nothing to be said in their favour. The birth of twins is rare, but if it occurs, the mother or a relative kills one at birth or soon afterwards. We were told that one of twins in a Yirrkala camp was to be killed, and upon inquiry learned that superstition was the driving force behind the custom. It is true that in the bush a mother can scarcely feed herself and one child, and that if she has two infants then at least three lives are endangered; so it seems probable that infanticide was introduced in past ages because of economic necessity. But as time went on,

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CHAPTER TEN

Medicine-Men and Magic

756 MAGIC, superstition, and credulity are inseparable from Stone Age medical practices. Healing magic is in the hands of a benevolent witch-doctor known as a 'marrnggit'. His name comes from the common word 'marrnggi', denoting knowledge, understanding, and insight. Good marrnggits are few and far between; their power and influence develop with age and astuteness. In almost every small horde, one man lays claim to supernatural powers, and although not professing to have the full inspiration of a genuine marrnggit [755] he will massage a stomach for diarrhoea or claim to suck out a mouthful of animal bones, pebbles, and blood from painful kidneys. A marrnggit is not made by choice, for the calling is by inspiration, and a mythical animal, resembling [787] a small honey-squirrel and known as a 'manggata', enters a man and transforms him into a marrnggit. Even so, a fully developed marrnggit cannot diagnose sickness or see an evil spirit; the little manggata does it for him.

Wattia was a good marrnggit, and it all began one day when he was asleep in his camp and a manggata came to him. The animal won his attention by digging a hole in his skull, but fortunately leaving the job half done. He returned later, when Wattia was seriously ill, and exercised his healing 'medicine'. As Wattia recovered, the manggata came the third time, and said: 'Do you remember that sickness? It was I who hit you and then returned and healed you. You know now that I have the power to kill and to heal.' Wattia talked with the manggata and admitted his claims, whereupon the spirit-animal took possession of his body and

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settled in his heart. Wattia immediately felt new strength and the desire to heal sickness in his friends. But he still did not know how to go about it, till another marrnggit came along and recognized the manggata in Wattia. He said: 'Wattia, you have a manggata there.'

'Yes, I know, he is new, and I have not worked with him.'

Shortly afterwards a woman was taken ill, and the visiting marrnggit told Wattia to test his skill: 'Wattia, you go and heal her and I will stand by and watch.'

Not having the least idea of what he should do, Wattia relied on the manggata who showed him the sickness, and as a result of his treatment the woman recovered. A few days afterwards, Wattia cured a child, and since that time his services have been much in demand. But to this day he cannot see the sickness or bring about the cures himself, this is the work of his manggata.

Credulity is the most potent factor in recovery, and it may be safely surmised that most cases of sickness recover in spite of native treatment. Aborigines have far greater respect for the effectiveness of their own practices than for European methods, even though the latter may bring about dramatic cures and prevent death. I remember the morning a young infant was brought to me with scarcely a square inch of unbroken skin on its body. The wounds had the appearance of acid burns, and it seemed that the child had been sleeping near a fire where women had been roasting cashew nuts. I treated the child for acid burns, and in about a week's time there was a decided improvement. But on the morning the infant disappeared, I was told that the mother had gone into the bush with the child because it had been 'cured' by the local marrnggit. He claimed to have removed an octopus from inside the victim, and he explained his diagnosis to me as he waited at the dispensary for a dose of cough mixture for himself! He said that a large octopus had entered the child's stomach whilst the mother was

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755 collecting shellfish, and to cure the child he had pummelled the stomach, subduing the parasite and sucking it out in an invisible form.

[164] A persistent epidemic of dysentery was making its way through the Yirrkala camp, and in desperation I finally dosed the two hundred occupants with castor oil, had all shelters burnt and a new camp made on the opposite side of the creek. There were no further applications for medicine, which suggested that everyone had recovered, and upon inquiry I was complacently told that there could be no further sickness, for on the night following the castor oil episode, the marrnggit had conducted a magical 'sing' and had put a spell on the mischievous spirit that had caused the trouble.

164 152 Aboriginal stamina in privation and suffering is proverbial, and the wounded exhibit stoicism and endurance beyond belief. Usually the only indication of suffering is in the flexing of muscles and the rolling of the head. Internal complaints, pains, and epidemics are much more likely to prove fatal, for they cannot be seen as can an open wound. 153 Imagination plays a big part with internal troubles, and the victim, thinking he is under an evil spell, prepares to die.

825 Yulengor have great fear of venomous snakes, and to show their contempt for non-venomous and edible varieties they insert the head upside down between their teeth and dislocate the vertebrae by jerking down with their hands. In Arnhem Land there are two varieties of venomous brown snakes in addition to the death-adder; although they are not as numerous as might be expected, they are by no means uncommon. One afternoon when I was burning a fire-break round an eight-acre paddock I killed seven death-adders. 752 Snake-bite can only be treated by first capturing the snake. 755 A forked stick is held behind its head and is later replaced 825 by the string by which it is suspended from a tree. On no account must the snake be killed, for if it is even injured the

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victim will surely die. Hanging the reptile is part of the cure, and it is thus held hostage for the life of its victim. If the man recovers, the snake is released. It must not be killed even after the man's recovery, for if it were killed the victim would suffer a relapse and die.

Young Geitbapoi was bitten by a snake, and his mother saved his life by capturing the snake and hanging it in a tree. The snake appeared to be dying; the boy's condition also grew worse, and death was expected. But the snake passed a lot of what was said to be the boy's blood, and this was incontrovertible evidence of the reptile's recovery, and likewise its victim's. Therefore the snake was released, and in an hour or so the youth stood up and walked.

Power to kill by magic belongs to an evil witch-doctor known as a 'raggalk', who waylays the man and causes a deep sleep to fall on him so that he may squeeze blood out of his heart. Despite this, the victim lives an ordinary life till the raggalk decides to finish his work by sending a snake to bite him. As with ordinary snake-bite, the raggalk's victim tries to find the snake, to effect a recovery, but such a search is never successful, for the raggalk whisks away his instrument of death. For this reason, when a snake cannot be found after it has bitten someone, the injury it has inflicted is attributed to a raggalk. A marnggit, or benevolent witch-doctor, can prove that a man has been bitten by a raggalk-snake by lighting a small smoke-fire, seating the man near it and blowing the smoke over him through a hollow pandanus palm-stem. In the curling smoke he sees the spirit of the raggalk emerging from the victim; he announces the name of the killer, and adds that nothing can save the life of the man.

Scorpions, stingray, and jellyfish are numerous, but their stings, though extremely painful, are seldom fatal. Scorpions attack women as they dig for yams among the stones on hillsides, and it is said that the groin or arm glands swell

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MEDICINE-MEN AND MAGIC

Faith-healing depends on an appeal to stars, water-spouts or Ancestors. If a man is wounded or ill he may appeal or 'sing' for help to a water-spout, for this is the only tangible link between the earth and the sky. If the appeal is successful, the water-spout sends a beam of light to shine on the sick man, and the light indicates that the water-spout has persuaded the man's ancestors to heal him. Ancestors later come in a dream and promise restoration, whereupon the man wakes up and says: 'I shall get better.'

An appeal may be made to a falling star, or 'larrpan', which sends a cool mist or fog over the patient to revive him, or if the star shoots through the sky and leaves a red trail it signifies that an Ancestor is on his way to heal the sufferer.

It may happen that a sick man is near his horde's totemic well; if so, he jumps into it and asks the mythical Snake to heal him. Though he cannot see the spirit of the Serpent, it comes out of hiding to lick him and restore him. If this totemic well is a long way off, a symbolical well may be scraped in the sand so that the sufferer can stand in it while water or sand is poured over him. His friends sit near by, singing the mythical story of Creation and calling on the Serpent for help.

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times an innocent tribal-enemy is accused of having become a raggalk to cause the death, and more often than not the accused openly admits the allegations, and though he be constantly pursued by the avengers he glories in his spurious notoriety. [754] [628]

Simpler magic known as 'borrpoiyuma' is brought to bear on a victim through his personal possessions, footprints, or excreta; anyone may practice the art without special training. A victim is spied on till he is seen to drop sweat, spittle, or urine, and his enemy lights a fire over the spot to heat the sand. The victim receives this heat in his abdomen and dies by slow torture. Should he realize that his trouble is due to evil magic he may counteract it by finding the fire and throwing water on it. In the case of ordure, the witch-doctor deposits it in a fire in a circle of stones, and a large flat stone and sand are packed on top to make an oven, which is left untouched for one or two moons. By that time the curse has worked and the victim has died in agony from pains in his stomach. [755]

A Blue Mud Bay nomad made a gift of armlets to a man from the Wessel Islands. Months after the gift had been made the Blue Mud Bay man developed sores on his arm and attributed them to the visitor's evil magic, and it was said that he caused them by throwing the armlets into a fire. In this instance the magic did not prove fatal, for the victim stemmed it by pursuing his 'enemy' and spearing him! Dilly-bags, pubic shields, or belts impregnated with sweat, are also means of contact between a witch-doctor and his prey. When a woman went blind for no apparent reason, it was surmised that her dilly-bag had been stolen and burnt. Her normal good health was evidence that magic had been used against her, but because she was a woman it was not worth while to search for the evil worker. [562]

Injuries may be inflicted by burning an enemy's waste

754 food in fire made from a certain shrub; as the heat increases his throat swells till he dies. The trouble can be cured only [755] by finding the fire and pouring water on it. If a spear or spear-thrower is broken and burnt, the owner's hands become crippled and twisted by rheumatism. A saccule or bark drinking-cup also provides means for injuring the one who drank from it, for if a pronged fish-spear is stabbed into it the victim's throat swells till he dies. Maleirpa the leper had lost most of his fingers and toes long before his misfortune was attributed to magic, but someone idly recalled that, years previously, Bulambi had followed Maleirpa's footprints along a beach and had aimlessly dropped the point of his pronged fish-spear into them. Obviously Maleirpa's toes had dropped off in consequence. As the victim did not die immediately, Bulambi was not [683] killed, but when the afflicted one finally succumbs, Bulambi will need to make restitution to his next-of-kin by the gift of a canoe, an axe, or spears. Meanwhile Bulambi, the leper, and his brothers fraternize and hunt happily together.

789 'Nyirrah' is specialized magic connected with the making 787 of wind and rain, the poisoning of food before it is eaten, and the controlling of a woman's desires so that she can be made to desert her husband and follow the man of Nyirrah. Such magic comes to a man in a dream, by instruction from another Yulengor or by direct bestowal from the Nyirrah spirit-centre. When the body is asleep human spirits are free [774] to roam and converse, and then a spirit with Nyirrah powers may invite another to see him kill a man or make rain. A [778] more direct method is to go inland to a mythical tree from which Nyirrah powers are dispensed. Approaching the tree the man hears the beating of clap-sticks, and their very invisibility proves that spirits inhabit the tree. If he is brave enough to go nearer Nyirrah will automatically come upon him.

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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Magic profoundly influences everyday beliefs and habits, and an ordinary nomad, as well as the witch-doctor, may set in operation magical powers.[1]

Prayer is offered to the spirits of the dead, and they are not only called on to receive departing human spirits, but in time of sickness, a man will call on the waterspout to carry his prayer to the spirits of his relatives.[2] A patient may also enter a totemic waterhole inhabited by a great mythical snake, which will effect the faith-cure.[3] Mythical serpents are called on for help, and receive prayers in time of acute danger and distress.

Makarola told me that he had been overtaken by darkness when returning with his family after a day's fishing. A strong wind arose and the canoe was blown out to sea, waves half-filled it, and whilst wives and children baled frantically in the darkness, he toiled to keep the dug-out into the wind. Makarola then remembered his totem and called on it for help. He said that in that instant he saw a 'bright light' which 'filled' his head. By the light he was assured that they would be brought safely to land, and when the wind abated, the family landed in an exhausted condition.

Though awe and fear weigh heavily in aboriginal religion, the nomad's religious outlook and practices are best summed up under the term 'Totemism'. Such totemism links man and nature and goes back to the ancestral creators of Junkgowa, who made the earth and its inhabitants, instituted present-day laws, habits and customs, and defined for all time the nomad's outlook and beliefs. Totemic beliefs and the record of their bestowal are preserved in the Ngara ceremonies, which are linked with the totem centres where the hero-Ancestors performed their mighty deeds. Behind the supernatural Ancestors, and beyond the present world, is the spirit-land of Buralkor, from whence they came.

[1] Chapter 13, 'Black Magic.'
[2] Chapter 10, 'Medicine-Men and Magic.'
[3] *Ibid.*